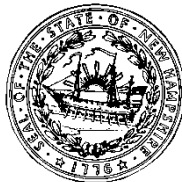


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February 27, 2015

Dear Superintendents, CIA Directors and Special Education Directors:

As you know, New Hampshire is embarking on a new alternate assessment for mathematics and English language arts – Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM). DLM is an instructionally relevant assessment system that supports student learning and measures what students with significant cognitive disabilities know and can do in these two subject areas. The system supports the design of individualized experiences for each student by presenting questions and tasks that are appropriate for a student's needs and abilities.

With the transition to this new assessment, the NH Department of Education (DOE) has received questions from school districts specifically regarding high school students and their participation in the assessment. Here are the facts:

- New Hampshire and federal law require that all students shall participate in the statewide assessment program once in high school.
- Most NH high school students that were eligible for the alternate assessment in math and/or English language arts last year met this requirement by taking the assessment in 10th grade.
- Students who took the assessment in other grades (2-7) must still take the DLM assessment this year because the law (RSA 193-C:6) is clear that all students in grades 3-8 shall participate in the assessment program.
- For districts who have students enrolled in their high schools that have not taken the alternate assessment (and are eligible) once in high school (in mathematics and/or English language arts) are required to do so this year.
- All high schools are required to implement the alternate assessment (districts must be prepared to do so). If there are no 11th grade students to participate in the DLM assessment in mathematics and/or English language arts (because all took both in 10th grade), then the district will need to ensure that it can provide documentation that this is the case, if requested.

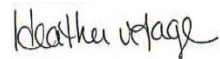
The NH DOE would like to offer ALL districts the opportunity to have students who previously participated in the NH ALPs in 10th grade to participate in the DLM as 11th graders, if you choose. This can occur if the decision has been made that the alternate assessment is appropriate for that student through the IEP process for the 2014-15 school year. This practice will not only allow the district to experience the implementation of this new assessment, but will give the district baseline data for their students this year.

The NH DOE will be requesting a year of “hold harmless” through its ESEA Flexibility Waiver renewal (due March 31, 2015) process regarding using the new assessments in the state accountability system. This means that during our year of transition to DLM and Smarter Balanced, the state will only report the results of the assessments and those results will not be used in the accountability system. The results of the assessments will be used in the accountability system again after two years of results have been gathered (2016-17). We hope this encourages you to allow your teachers and students the ability to participate in DLM in 11th grade this year.

In addition, the NH Department of Education will be contracting with Keystone Assessment, LLC (pending approval) to provide online training and technical support to special education directors, assessment coordinators and teachers for the Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) Assessment, including administration procedures and accommodation and accessibility features. Keystone will provide webinar and email technical assistance to build the capacity of New Hampshire to reliably and validly administer the DLM assessment to students. This model represents training that Keystone staff has successfully used in ten states, districts, and territories that are transitioning from their state assessments to national consortium assessments. We will be sending information to Special Education Directors very soon regarding this resource.

Please contact Dr. Scott Mantie (scott.mantie@doe.nh.gov) or Susan Morgan (susan.morgan@doe.nh.gov) if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Heather Gage, Director
Division of Educational Improvement